City/Culture

ANTH 344/544
Fall 2020
Online Course
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Course Objectives:

This online upper level seminar explores how cities are planned, represented and navigated, and interrogates collectively imagined forms of social life and order as they are reflected in urban design. Drawing on films, novels, and readings in anthropology, geography, sociology, media studies, architectural history, and literary criticism, it analyzes how our subject positions shape the ways in which we view and inhabit our urban environments. By studying the infrastructures that make up a city, such as garbage collection, transportation, water and electricity, we will examine how political, social and economic relations make themselves known through such seemingly technical assemblages.

Participants are not expected to have any background regarding the issues that will be covered during this course. Please come to class having carefully read and watched assignments due that day. Taking advantage of the online format of this class, we will be hosting two guest lecturers in our Zoom meetings, an anthropologist and a geographer whose work on urbanism we will be reading as part of this class. In learning how to see cities and infrastructures in fresh ways, you will be expected to complete exercises that will introduce you to methodological models in ethnographic research and writing. Your thoughtful contributions are essential to this class.

Office Hours:

Office hours are by appointment only. Email your instructor to set up a Zoom meeting.

Zoom Etiquette:

When you join the class, please keep your video camera on and microphone muted. Unmute when you have questions or would like to participate. You can also use the chat function for posting side comments, sharing links, or adding details on a previous discussion. Students needing an accommodation for using their camera or microphone should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss and work out needed adjustments.

WhatsApp Group:

This class will have a WhatsApp group. If technological problems arise with CANVAS or Zoom, we will communicate on this alternative platform. Students are also encouraged to chat with each other regarding topics of relevance to the class on this platform. You will not be graded for your participation. If you are not able to join a WhatsApp group for any particular reason, please let your instructor know as soon as possible.

Assignments:

Participation: Participants are expected to attend our Zoom meetings on time and be ready to actively engage in discussion based on readings. Please prepare at least one question related to the material we read and cover. As the discussion proceeds, you might be called on to contribute by sharing your question. Your reflections are integral to class meetings.

Presentation of Course Material: Every student will be responsible for presenting selected course material to the class. Presentations will be done in pairs (undergraduate students) or individually (graduate students). It is your responsibility to coordinate your work with your presentation partner. Presentations should be geared towards starting discussion based on the main points in our readings, and should not take up more than 8-10 minutes of class time. Please consult your instructor if you have any questions regarding structure. Feel free to use visuals, as these might make communication easier on Zoom.

Exercise 1: Pick a window in your current residence. Sit by the window for one hour, watching the outside world uninterruptedly. Note down everything you see, in the form of a list, and produce a document that emulates Perec's An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris. This exercise is the first step in learning how to see your surroundings in a new way, and will serve as a foundation for the following two assignments. You will notice patterns that you may not have noticed before. If you have personal reasons that prevent you from completing the exercise, please be in touch with your instructor. Post your work on CANVAS, so that your classmates can also see it. We will discuss your texts during our class meeting. DUE SEPTEMBER 21st CLASS TIME.

Exercise 2: Try to imagine your current domestic space from the perspective of another person who cohabits with you, or from the perspective of a nonhuman. What do they notice in these surroundings that you might not? How is their relationship to the space you inhabit different from yours? What are some architectural features they

might rely on, which you do not? If you choose a person, feel free to talk to them about these differences. This exercise will serve as a second step in having you see your surroundings in new ways. Note down your observations carefully. Write 500 words describing and analyzing your notes. You can add photos or a video to this text, if you think visuals would contribute to your general points. Papers must be typed 12pt font, 1-inch margins. Post your work on CANVAS, so that your classmates can also see it. Your essay is DUE OCTOBER 12th CLASS TIME.

Exercise 3: Pick one of the elements you included in your list for Exercise 1. Scale up, and learn about aspects of this element that remain invisible to you. Say you pick a public bus. You might want to research where this public bus goes, and what it represents as part of a larger transportation network. When was it first used? How was it funded? How many people ride it? What is the demographic that uses it? See whatever you can find based on primary and secondary sources. Use this one element you pick as a lens through which you can understand the place where you live. Please communicate your findings in the form of a research paper, which combines empirical research and analytical reflection. A bibliography in a standard citation format must be included. Papers must be typed 12pt font, 1-inch margins. Undergraduate papers will be 2000 words. Graduate students are expected to write 5000 words. Please consult your instructor regarding your topic of choice. Submit your work via CANVAS as a word document. Your papers are due Monday, NOVEMBER 30th 5 pm Houston time.

Evaluation Guidelines:

- Participation 25%
- Presentation of Course Material 15%
- Exercise 1 10%
- Exercise 2 15%
- Exercise 3 35%

Books to Order/Download:

Calvino, Italo. 1972. Invisible Cities.

Perec, George. An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris.

Bloch, Stefano. 2019. Going All City: Struggle and Survival in LA's Graffiti Subculture. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

All other readings will be available on CANVAS.

Honor Code Statement:

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/ This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

Accessibility Statement:

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / adarice@rice.edu / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

Title IX Responsible Employee Notification:

Rice University cares about your wellbeing and safety. Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of harassment, pregnancy discrimination or gender discrimination or relationship, sexual, or other forms interpersonal violence to seek support from The SAFE Office.

At Rice University, unlawful discrimination in any form, including sexual misconduct, is prohibited under Rice Policy on Harassment and Sexual Harassment (Policy 830) and the Student Code of Conduct. As the instructor and a responsible employee, I am required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to the Title IX Coordinator on campus. Although responsible employees are required to make this notification, it is the student's choice to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make sure that students are aware of the range of options available and have access to the resources when in need. For more information, please visit safe.rice.edu, titleix.rice.edu, or email titleixsupport@rice.edu.

Syllabus Change Policy:

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Material:

Monday, August 24:

Introduction

Monday, August 31: How do we imagine the city?

Poe, Edgar Allan. 1840. "Man of the Crowd."

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. The Practice of Everyday Life. Berkeley: University of California Press. Read "Walking in the City," pp. 90-111.

Calvino, Italo. 1972. Invisible Cities.

Jacobs, Jane. 1961. The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York: Random House, pp. 29-74, sections titled: "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety and Contact"

Monday, September 7:

LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Monday, September 14: Can we change society by building a new kind of city?

Holston, James. 1989. The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 31–98.

Caldeira, Teresa. 2000. City of Walls: Crime, Segregation and Citizenship in Sao Paolo. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 256–269.

Brown, Adrienne. 2017. The Black Skyscraper: Architecture and the Perception of Race. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, Chapter 1, p. 1–34.

Monday, September 21:

Perec, George. An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris.

EXERCISE 1 DUE CLASS TIME. POST YOUR WORK ON CANVAS AND BE PREPARED TO READ SELECTIONS IN CLASS.

Monday, September 28: How does transnational architecture practice contribute to the making of contemporary cities?

Adalet, Begüm. 2018. Hotels and Highways. Stanford: Stanford University Press, Chapter 5, p. 159–191.

Menoret, Pascal. 2014. Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 61–101.

D'Avella, Nicholas. 2019. Concrete Dreams: Practice, Value, and Built Environments in Post-Crisis Buenos Aires. Durham: Duke University Press, chapter 5, p. 179–222.

Monday, October 5: What forms of urban dwelling do we long for?

Fehervary, Krisztina. 2011. "The Materiality of the New Family House in Hungary: Postsocialist Fad or Middle-class Ideal." City & Society Vol. 23, Issue 1, pp. 18–41.

Melly, Caroline. 2010. "Inside-Out Houses: Urban Belonging and Imagined Futures in Dakar, Senegal" Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 52, No. 1, pp. 37-65

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2019. Race for Profit. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, Chapter 2, p. 55-93.

Freidrichs, Chad. 2011. Pruitt-Igoe Myth. 84 minutes.
https://rice.kanopy.com/video/pruitt-igoe-myth-0

Monday, October 12:

EXERCISE 2 DUE CLASS TIME. POST YOUR WORK ON CANVAS AND BE PREPARED TO READ SELECTIONS IN CLASS.

Monday, October 19: How does human labor shape the city?

Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2004. "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg" Public Culture vol.16 (3): 407–429.

Bloch, Stefano. 2019. Going All City: Struggle and Survival in LA's Graffiti Subculture. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 1-100

Zhangke, Jia. 2008. 24 City. 107 minutes: https://rice.kanopy.com/video/24-city

GUEST APPEARANCE: STEFANO BLOCH

Monday, October 26: How do cities become smart?

Günel, Gökçe. 2019. Spaceship in the Desert: Energy, Climate Change and Urban Design in Abu Dhabi. Durham: Duke University Press, chapter 1

Halpern, Orit, Jesse LeCavalier, Nerea Calvillo, and Wolfgang Pietsch. 2013. "Test-Bed Urbanism". Public Culture 25 (2): 273–306.

Gabrys, Jennifer. 2016. Program Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 185–267

Monday, November 2nd: What are some ways of imagining and representing gender in the city?

Menoret, Pascal. 2014. Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 133–173

Renard, Amélie Le. 2014. A Society of Young Women: Opportunities of Place, Power, and Reform in Saudi Arabia. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, p. 1–51.

Tongson, Karen. 2011. Relocations: Queer Suburban Imaginaries. New York: New York University Press, introduction

GUEST APPEARANCE: PASCAL MENORET

RECOMMENDED ZOOM LECTURE at RICE ARCHITECTURE:

Wednesday November 4th, 6 p.m.:
Thomas Sugrue, professor of social and cultural analysis and history, director of The Cities Collaborative and director of the Metropolitan Studies Program at New York University, "Less Separate, Still Unequal: Cities, Suburbs and the Unfinished Struggle for Racial Justice."

Monday, November 9th: How do people and things flow in urban landscapes?

Sopranzetti, Claudio. 2014. "Owners of the Map: Mobility and Mobilization among Motorcycle Taxi Drivers in Bangkok" City and Society 26(1): 120–143.

Günel, Gökçe. 2019. Spaceship in the Desert: Energy, Climate Change and Urban Design in Abu Dhabi. Durham: Duke University Press, chapter 4

Bishara, Amahl. 2015. "Driving while Palestinian in Israel and the West Bank: The politics of disorientation and the routes of a subaltern knowledge." American Ethnologist 42 (1): 33–54.

Millar, Kathleen. 2018. Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio's Garbage Dump. Durham: Duke University Press, chapter 4, pp. 123–151.

Monday, November 16th: How does violence shape urban life?

Al-Mohammad, Hayder. 2012. "A Kidnapping in Basra: The Struggles and Precariousness of Life in Post-invasion Iraq." Cultural Anthropology 27, no. 4: 597–614

Bou Akar, Hiba. 2018. For the War Yet to Come: Planning Beirut's Frontiers. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, chapter 3

Weizman, Eyal. 2007. Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation. New York: Verso, p. 1–25

FINAL PAPER DUE NOVEMBER 30th 5 PM HOUSTON TIME